

SUPPORTING THE GOALS AND IDEALS OF WORLD WATER DAY

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 196) supporting the goals and ideals of World Water Day.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 196

Whereas the global celebration of World Water Day is an initiative that grew out of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro;

Whereas the United Nations General Assembly, via resolution, designated March 22 of each year as World Water Day;

Whereas although water is the most widely occurring substance on earth, only 2.53 percent of all water is freshwater and the remainder is salt water;

Whereas freshwater resources are further impaired by various forms of industrial, chemical, human, and agricultural pollution;

Whereas climate change will increasingly pose a challenge for ensuring the availability of sufficient water supplies at the appropriate times;

Whereas approximately one in six people in the world lack access to safe drinking water and approximately two in every five people lack access to basic sanitation services;

Whereas water-related diseases are among the most common causes of illness and death, afflicting primarily the poor and very poor in developing countries;

Whereas up to five million people die each year from preventable water and sanitation related diseases, including one out of every five children in the poorest countries;

Whereas every \$1 invested in safe drinking water and sanitation yields an economic return of between \$3 and \$34, depending on the region;

Whereas increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation advances efforts towards other United States development objectives including fighting poverty and hunger, promoting primary education and gender equality, reducing child mortality, promoting environmental stability, improving the lives of slum dwellers, and strengthening national security;

Whereas the participants in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, including the United States, agreed to the Plan of Implementation which included an agreement to work to reduce by one-half from the baseline year 1990 "the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water," and "the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation" by 2015; and

Whereas Congress passed and the President signed into law the "Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005" (Public Law 109-121) which was intended to "elevate the role of water and sanitation policy in the development of U.S. foreign policy and improve the effectiveness of U.S. official programs": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) supports the goals and ideals of World Water Day;

(2) recognizes the importance of increasing access to safe drinking water and sanitation, as well as the conservation and sustainable management of water resources, to human health and quality of life across the globe;

(3) urges an increased effort and the investment of greater resources by the Department of State, the United States Agency for Inter-

national Development, and all relevant Federal departments and agencies towards providing sustainable and equitable access to safe drinking water and sanitation for the poor and very poor; and

(4) encourages the people of the United States to observe World Water Day with appropriate recognition, ceremonies, activities, and programs to demonstrate the importance of water to humanity.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I might consume.

I would first like to commend my distinguished colleague and a former member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, EARL BLUMENAUER of Oregon, for introducing this important resolution.

Nearly 5 years ago, representatives of governments around the globe, including the United States, stood together and agreed to reduce by one-half the number of people who lack access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by the year 2015. We now stand at the midpoint of that target, and we are no closer to reaching it than we were at the outset.

Today over 900 million people lack access to safe water, and over 1.3 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation. Climate change is rapidly depleting the world's already badly stretched water resources.

Each year more than 3 billion of our fellow human beings suffer from preventable water-related diseases. As a result of these diseases, 5 million people die. Most of these victims are children under the age of 5. Clearly, more must be done to address this humanitarian catastrophe.

Our legislation, H. Res. 196, demonstrates the commitment of the Congress to achieve the goals and ideals of World Water Day to increase the availability of clean water.

Collectively, we have the means to address this global crisis. What we need is political will for action. Congress swiftly acted with the passage of the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act in 2005, a critically important piece of legislation spearheaded by the distinguished gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) with the support of my former colleague, Chairman Henry Hyde, and myself.

This resolution is another step in improving our commitment to bringing

clean water and basic sanitation to the poorest of the poor. H. Res. 196 urges our own government to utilize every resource at our disposal to improve access to clean water and sanitation for those most in need. It recognizes the importance of conservation and sustainable management of water resources to both human health and the quality of life.

We must do all we can to provide clean water and basic sanitation for all people across the globe.

Madam Speaker, I strongly support this resolution and urge all of my colleagues to do so.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of House Resolution 196, which expresses the support of this House for the goals and ideals associated with World Water Day.

The lack of access to safe drinking water and the lack of adequate sanitation systems continue to be major problems for poor people around the world despite our strong efforts over many decades to help address those challenges. The lack of clean water and sanitation systems in many parts of the world lead to the spread of disease and to the deaths that might otherwise have been avoided and undermines the efforts we take to assist poor people around the world as they seek a better life.

Madam Speaker, I just got back last week from a heart-wrenching trip to Darfur, and we saw firsthand how important a resource water is to so many people. We saw, by visiting the clinics, how many people are afflicted with the diseases that are borne because of the water that is not pure, that is not sanitized and that is, in fact, full of bacteria. I understand how important it is to support the goals and ideals of this resolution before us commemorating World Water Day.

In addition to sanitation and access to clean water, the conservation of water resources is, itself, an increasing challenge around the world. Conservation of drinking water will, in fact, remain even a greater challenge in the near future as mankind's population continues to expand and the demand for fresh, clean water increases.

In calling for the appropriate Departments and agencies of the United States Government to increase our efforts to support access to clean water, availability of sanitation systems and conservation of water, this resolution properly cites the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005 enacted in the last Congress, which called for a greater focus on the objectives that are associated with World Water Day.

This resolution rightfully seeks to highlight this global problem encouraging all of us to observe World Water Day every year on March 22. I support the intent of this resolution and its adoption by this House.